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ABSTRACT

Practical information for businesspeople in support of fundamental, collaborative educational change is presented in this report. The first section points out that fundamental educational restructuring is necessary in a changing society with different needs and that school business partnerships are required to implement systemic change. The following strategies for business involvement are outlined: building a coalition; understanding the issues; supporting the development and implementation of a statewide restructuring initiative; supporting projects that contribute to the overall restructuring effort; advocating change; walking the talk; and monitoring results. Ineffective change strategies overemphasize increased funding without resource allocation, individual schools instead of the school system, change at the margins, single change approaches, increased standardized testing, and efforts involving only educators instead of all parties holding a stake in education. The summary argues for a primary focus on all children's learning. The last section offers two profiles of business community involvement in school reform activity in South Carolina and Washington. Two figures highlight key issues and principles of restructuring. (LMI)

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STATEWIDE RESTRUCTURING OF EDUCATION

A Handbook for Business

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STATEWIDE RESTRUCTURING OF EDUCATION

A Handbook for Business

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CONTENTS

AN OPPORTUNITY 1
- Changing Society/Changing Needs 1
- The Need for Fundamental Change 2
- Big Stakes for Business 2

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT 3
- Build a Coalition 3
- Understand the Issues 4
  - Key Issues in Restructuring Education 5
- Support the Development and Implementation of a Statewide Restructuring Initiative 7
  - Principles of Restructuring 7
- Support Projects That Contribute to the Overall Restructuring Effort 9
- Advocate Change 10
- Walk the Talk 12
- Monitor Results 13

WHAT DOESN'T WORK 14

IN SUMMARY 15

STATE EXAMPLES 16

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 19

AN OPPORTUNITY

With each new report about the performance of American students and schools, with each new comparison of American education to education elsewhere, with each *Wall Street Journal* or television report on the condition of education and its impact on business and the quality of life — there is a growing sense of urgency about the need for change in education. The President and the National Governors' Association recently proposed a set of demanding goals for American education. State leaders all over the country already have reform efforts under way. Corporate leaders are seeking new ways to involve business in supporting needed change.

Changing Society/Changing Needs

At a time when school dropout rates are alarmingly high and achievement indicators are alarmingly low, the educational needs of the society have escalated dramatically. The U.S. economy has shifted from its previous manufacturing base to a new emphasis on technology, information and service. American business must compete internationally, and new jobs are demanding new kinds of skills. By the year 2000, a substantial majority of all new jobs will require postsecondary education. Businesses will need far fewer workers who can perform standardized "cog jobs" and far more workers who can identify problems and create solutions on the spot and in collaboration with co-workers.

Educational needs beyond the workplace are changing as well. Effective participation in American democracy increasingly requires understanding of complex issues — environmental protection, economic development, abortion — and skills in the political process. At the same time, the United States is becoming a two-tiered society, with a growing disadvantaged underclass that is increasingly disconnected from the economy and even the basic requirements of human life.

In this context, it becomes quickly evident that the need in education is **not** a need to do the old things better. The need is for higher expectations for all learners, for new ways of teaching and for new kinds of learning. American students must do more than memorize facts, more than acquire a prescribed body of knowledge. They must be able to think critically and creatively; to identify and solve problems; to sort through large volumes of new information, select that which is pertinent and apply it in practical situations. They must know how to communicate skillfully, collaborate effectively and participate responsibly in their communities.

The Need for Fundamental Change

The hope for addressing these needs lies in fundamentally restructuring the education system. A little change, a few minor adjustments here and there, will not do it. The need is for structural change, from the schoolhouse to the statehouse.

At least two major challenges will complicate that effort. First, the problem is a **dynamic** problem. The issue is not that the schools have failed; the issue is that society has changed and will continue to change faster than the schools, as presently structured, can respond. Even if one could design ideal schools for the early 1990s, they would very soon be obsolete again. Crucially needed is an education system that is self-examining, self-correcting, self-renewing.

The second challenge arises from the fact that American society is diverse and rapidly becoming more so. That diversity often is described in terms of race, ethnicity and cultural heritage, and those

factors are obviously very important. In regard to education, though, there are two other kinds of diversity that are at least equally powerful. First, family background — economic status, value placed on education, expectations held for and communicated to children, and so on — has a powerful impact on a child's success in the education system. And second, people vary significantly in their learning styles. Unfortunately, the current education system assumes that the right way to learn is to learn in an abstract mode by listening to someone tell you things. As it turns out, that is not the best learning style for most children.

Fundamental change. Structural change. The education system must not only be better. It must be **different.**

Big Stakes for Business

As growing numbers of businesspeople realize, problems in education affect the daily operations of businesses in immediate, measurable ways. The need for literate, technically competent job applicants is but one obvious example. Over the longer term, the development of a competitive American workforce affects both the prosperity of the individual business and the vitality of the national economy.

In early school/business partnerships, corporations generally acted on agendas set by others. Traditional schooling continued as the corporate community provided resources for programs that the normal school budget did not allow. Many children, teachers, parents and businesspeople benefited enormously from these partnerships. *But the add-ons did not add up to systemic change; they left the basic structure intact.*

Now business leaders have a special stake in improving education. They also have a special opportunity. By deepening their involvement, by selecting appropriate strategies, by pressing for fundamental rather than superficial change, and by working collaboratively with other partners in the endeavor, business leaders can realize an enormous return on their investment. The purpose of this handbook is to provide practical information in support of those efforts.

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy #1: Build a Coalition

An effective statewide coalition is crucial in an effort to promote statewide systemic change. Such a group provides the leadership, vision and continuity for overseeing the redesign of a large public system — a task that cannot be accomplished effectively by fragmented forces and isolated policy changes. Obviously, the first step is to bring together the leaders of "stakeholder" groups whose support is essential. The coalition must include representatives from several key groups, including the following:

- **The business community.** Why? Because the business community has the biggest single stake, other than the state government, in the effectiveness of the education system.
- **State government.** Why? Because the state government makes most of the rules by which schools operate.
- **District and school leaders.** Why? Because board members, superintendents and principals manage the immediate environment within which schools operate. Further, their approach to leadership may have to change to encourage systemic restructuring. If ignored, change will be minimal.
- **The teacher unions.** Why? Because the unions, where they are party to the restructuring game, can be a constructive force for change. When ignored, they can be a source of resistance.
- **Parents and community leaders.** Why? Because parents and community leaders are trusting their future, their children, to the education system.

Experience indicates there are some key elements in building an effective coalition. Especially important are these steps:

- **Dropping individual agendas.** The goal of a coalition is to develop a broad vision of reform that transcends special interests. A coalition agenda cannot be a compendium of members' pet projects. Instead, the group must develop common ground.
- **Developing a common vision.** The coalition's advocacy efforts and strategies for change must emanate from a shared understanding of how schools should work and what students should know and be able to do.
- **Translating the vision into an agenda for change.** The gap between the education system as it is and the vision of what is needed will vary from state to state. In each case, the coalition must make decisions about priorities for action, about the roles and responsibilities of coalition members in accomplishing the agenda, and about appropriate ways to involve others.
- **Selling the plan to the public.** To mobilize the entire community behind reform and to influence the policy makers who can make reform happen, the coalition needs to take its plan to the public.

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy #2: Understand the Issues

Business leaders committed to promoting transformation of the education system need not become education experts. In fact, the "external" perspective of astute, concerned people is crucial to professional educators.

But the restructuring of an education system is an enormously complex undertaking. To be an effective leader, advocate or coalition member requires, therefore, a general sense of the key issues. As is so often true in corporate leadership, it is usually more important to ask the right questions than to presume to know all the right answers.

Key issues in the education reform debate are depicted in the table on the following pages. Questions behind those issues include the following:

- Who is capable of learning?
- What should students know and be able to do?
- How can teaching be most effective?
- How should learning be assessed?
- How should teachers be prepared?
- How is equity achieved?
- Who makes what decisions?
- What is the appropriate role of parents, business, community organizations and social service agencies?
- And yes, who pays, how much, and for what?

While seeking their own understanding, business leaders can also promote broader understanding of the issues among other coalition members and the general public. Approaches may include:

- Requesting briefings — oral and written — by policy makers, education leaders and school personnel
- Commissioning or reviewing consultant studies
- Sponsoring dialogue and debate, from one-on-one conversations to "focus-group" discussion to communitywide forums
- Learning about the experience of other communities and states involved in restructuring
- And always: Asking hard questions and insisting on clear answers.

KEY ISSUES IN RESTRUCTURING EDUCATION

ISSUE	TRADITIONAL VIEW	EMERGING VIEW
Curriculum	Schooling should focus on the acquisition of a common body of knowledge. Students should study the same subjects and the same books at the same grade levels.	Schooling should emphasize the development of skills in thinking, problem solving and teamwork. Learning should be individualized.
Teaching	The knowledge students should learn resides in teachers and textbooks. Direct instruction by teachers is the most effective way to transmit knowledge.	Learning is an active process, and learners must do most of the work. The major role of teachers is to challenge and coach students in ways that foster learning.
School Readiness	Readiness is largely a function of age and individual talents. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that by the time students are in first grade, the large majority are ready for first-grade work. Efforts to assist needy students are organized as add-on programs.	Students come to school with significant differences in their readiness to participate in the traditional classroom. Teachers who are prepared to respond to those differences can help students succeed in school.
Expectations for Students	All students do not have the same talents. Some, for example, "are just not college material."	Every student can learn far more than is currently expected of him or her.
Assessment	School improvement is best documented through improved student scores on standardized tests.	Current tests and prevailing testing practices are inadequate in assessing many important learning outcomes.
Teacher Preparation and Development	Teachers require specialized training, which is best provided by schools of education or graduate schools prior to entering the classroom.	Teaching is an art learned through practice. Prospective teachers who know their subjects and want to work with students could bypass standard routes to certification. Professional development must be a career-long process.
System Renewal	School systems know what's good for students and are structured to provide those services efficiently.	The school system must structure itself to respond continually and creatively to changing needs.

(continued on next page)

KEY ISSUES (continued)

ISSUE	TRADITIONAL VIEW	EMERGING VIEW
Equity	Equity is achieved when all students have access to identical educational resources — funding, supplies, buildings and teachers.	Differences in culture, personality and learning style should be recognized. Schools must help a diverse student body meet high expectations.
Decision Making	All schools should offer essentially the same education. Most critical decisions, therefore, must be made at the district or state level.	School personnel should be able to make their own decisions about day-to-day operations, budget and staffing. Diversity in curriculum, teaching and the use of time is needed to reach students with diverse abilities. What needs to be centralized are goals for education and approaches to accountability.
Choice	Children attend schools near their homes.	Choice makes sense when schools have adopted a thoughtful plan to improve themselves. Competition under the present system will reward strong schools and punish weak ones, without providing the support schools need to change.
Parent Involvement	Parents should listen to professional educators. They should see that their children do their homework and come to school prepared to learn.	A full partnership involving parents, educators and students is the best way to ensure that children get the most out of schooling. Parents and teachers should be mutually accountable and have common expectations.
Collaboration with Business and Civic Groups	The role of business and community groups is to help carry out an education agenda exclusively designed by the experts — professional educators.	Responsibility for education must be shared. Business and community groups should become full partners with professional educators in setting the vision and plan for schools.
Collaboration with Social Service Agencies	Schools and teachers are in the business of educating students. They have neither the resources nor the skills to meet other needs.	Because students' nonacademic needs affect learning, schools cannot ignore them. Schools should become the center of a system that meets the full range of children's needs.

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy #3: Support the Development and Implementation of a Statewide Restructuring Initiative

Work with individual schools (rather than an entire state system) is sometimes appealing because the task may seem less onerous and the results may seem more immediate. A statewide initiative, though more complex, will produce more fundamental and lasting change, altering the learning environment for **all** students, not just a fortunate few.

A statewide initiative should be grounded in the following principles:

Principles of Restructuring

- The goal of restructuring is to improve learning for **all** students.
- The entire system — from schoolhouse to statehouse — is involved in restructuring, and the entire system must change.
- Curriculum and instruction must capture students' interest in learning and promote thinking skills.
- Schools must have the authority and flexibility to create educationally sound programs based on their needs and resources.
- Accountability for results must accompany authority and flexibility and should rest on assessment of important learning goals.
- Emphasis must shift from enforcement and monitoring to creating and supporting schools where more children learn more.
- Coherent policies must be implemented across all parts of the system, including curriculum, assessment, teacher and administrator preparation and professional development.
- Visionary leadership must be exercised at all levels of the system and by broad-based public coalitions.
- Risk-taking and experimentation are required to transform schools into dynamic, self-renewing organizations.
- A substantial investment in human resources is required — especially for the preparation and ongoing professional development of teachers and administrators.
- Equity and excellence must be treated as compatible and achievable goals.
- Collaboration between the education system and social service agencies is required to ensure that all students are ready to learn.

To translate these principles into reality, business leaders and coalitions must take productive initial steps. Although there are many points of access to influence policy making in ways that promote system change, the following initial steps are effective in beginning the process:

- Facilitate a broad-based process to develop a vision of desired student outcomes and the kind of education system that will produce them
- Aggressively support policy and programs that enhance the chances for **all** children to meet high expectations for learning, for example, early childhood education, mentoring, parental involvement
- Press policy makers to:
  - Remove policy barriers
  - Use new policies as catalysts for change
  - Align and revise existing policy to support restructuring
  - Provide flexibility for schools to encourage experimentation
- Support the identification of pilot schools to serve as models
- Insist on accountability for results, supported by rewards and sanctions
- Encourage the restructuring of the state department of education and district offices to focus on setting goals and supporting schools rather than regulation and control
- Insist on the radical reform of teacher and administrator education to support restructuring in the schools
- Press for retraining and ongoing professional development for current school staff

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy #4: Support Projects That Contribute to the Overall Restructuring Effort

One of the potential hazards of intense corporate and community interest in school improvement is the proliferation of unconnected initiatives and projects. Well-meaning sponsors of such projects may unintentionally contribute to confusion and fragmentation. School personnel and system leaders may feel more overwhelmed than encouraged, and much energy is wasted in efforts to eliminate duplication and coordinate activities. The school reform effort thus becomes random rather than strategic, and momentous opportunities may be lost.

Certainly, one important way for business to have an impact is through the sponsorship of discrete projects. The key to ensuring and multiplying impact is to select and develop projects that are consistent with the overall strategy for education reform. Rather than promoting a "piecemeal" approach, then, projects can be targeted, thoughtful pieces that fit into a coherent whole.

With coherence as the criterion, businesses may — on their own or through coalition effort — support a variety of restructuring initiatives. Again, state-level initiatives will likely produce broader and more lasting results. Examples of constructive initiatives may include:

- **Curriculum and teaching:** rewriting curriculum; purchasing books and equipment that support new instructional techniques.
- **Human resource development:** retraining science and math teachers; developing and sustaining a cadre of excellent teachers who train others; supporting partnerships between public teacher training institutions and schools to support teacher development; supporting principal leadership institutes.
- **Assessment:** redesigning assessment instruments and training teachers to use them; publishing assessment data.
- **Collaboration with social service agencies:** supporting partnerships between schools and community agencies; training lay members of school communities to provide support to families — home visitors, parent educators, child care providers, for example.
- **Structural change:** providing incentive grants to reinforce innovative practices; paying for **time** — time for developing new working relationships between teachers, principals and parents, time for teachers to plan new approaches to curriculum and so on.

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy #5: Advocate Change — Publicly. Frequently. Insistently.

One of the most important roles of business leaders in the effort to improve education is, very simply, the role of public advocate. Advocacy may take any of these forms:

- Promoting increased public awareness of the **need** for education reform.
- Organizing or joining coalition efforts that press for **systemic** change.
- Calling for regular publication of current, pertinent information about restructuring progress and about the performance of students and schools.
- Funding independent sources of information about the school system.
- Working with the governor and legislature to develop state policy action plans.
- Organizing broad public and political support for policy change.

If the leadership of the current system is unresponsive, public advocacy can be adversarial. But when the current leadership is part of the problem, an adversarial approach may be necessary, at least initially, to produce change.

Promoting fundamental change in any large system is a lengthy and often frustrating process. The restructuring of education is further complicated by at least two factors.

First, public systems generally have less flexibility than do private enterprises. Change strategies commonly used in business — bringing in new managers, firing employees, segmenting markets, eliminating unproductive units, for example — are often very difficult to employ in public institutions. It is virtually impossible to decide to change clientele or to curtail service to a region. Generally speaking, change in the education system must be accomplished with, through or despite the current assets and liabilities — people, buildings, students and communities.

Second, current patterns and traditions of public schooling in America are deeply ingrained, not only in school personnel but also in parents and the public at large. A successful restructuring initiative must begin with sustained effort to convince people — especially those whose interests are relatively well served by the status quo — of a compelling need for change.

For business leaders who take on the challenging role of advocate, a few reminders:

- The first step is to set clear, tough goals. People need to see where they are going.
- Don't let discussions of **means** (budgets, standard procedures, regulations) deflect attention from important **ends**.
- Link changes in practice to changes in policy. Seek coherent, consistent change across system levels.
- Insist that careful thought be given to the creation of **incentives** for change. Policy should encourage innovation rather than inhibit or merely tolerate it.

- Be flexible. Meaningful and lasting change requires "buy-in" by the people within the system. There is more than one "right" path up the mountain.

- Realize that every initiative for change will be debated by many and resisted by some.

- Allow time. Leaders and coalition members need to be prepared to spend the next 10 years working on education restructuring.

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy # 6: Walk the Talk

The focus of business involvement in education reform is generally on helping to change **schools**. Thinking about ways the corporation itself can change is less common but potentially productive. Following are some possibilities for translating the principles of education restructuring into the corporate setting.

Personnel policies. A corporation might, for example, consider criteria used to hire new workers. Do the criteria relate to school performance? Should they? Could they? Do the availability and requirements of corporate jobs encourage high school students to develop critical- and creative-thinking skills?

To support employees who are parents, a corporation might consider personnel policies that allow for greater flexibility on the job and more time for children as well as school and community involvement. How do policies regarding work schedules, leave, promotions, relocation and benefits encourage or discourage employees' interest in their children and schools?

Training and development policies. Most large corporations are spending millions of dollars on training, retraining and employee development. Are these programs exemplars of effective teaching and staff development? Could they become models or even research centers for new approaches to teaching and learning?

Product lines. Do any of the corporation's products or services meet the needs of schools? Could products marketed to children or families be redesigned to support learning, education, family life, good health?

The challenge is for corporations to "walk their talk" — to discover how they can use the full capacity of their firms to influence the educational life of their communities.

STRATEGIES FOR BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT

Strategy #7: Monitor Results

Perhaps the most important things business leaders can do in promoting education restructuring are, ultimately, the simplest things as well. Here are the watchwords:

- Ask the hard questions. Keep asking.
- Insist on high expectations and better results for **all** students. Keep insisting.
- Demand adequate, accurate, timely information.
- Help change the rules.
- Aim for coherence but not for conformity.
- Ask for evidence of change. In particular, monitor outcomes for students.
- Support the measures that work; insist that those that don't work be altered or discarded.
- Help define next steps. Change is evolutionary.
- Keep change alive. No "fixed" system will be adequate for long.

WHAT DOESN'T WORK

Despite the difficulty of the task, reform of education can and must occur. There are successful efforts under way in some places. It can be done everywhere.

In dealing with any complex process of change, it is often at least as helpful to know what ***doesn't*** work as it is to know what strategies are most likely to be effective. Here is what doesn't work in reforming the education system:

- **More money *alone* will not work.** Money is important, of course, but the central issue is the reallocation of resources.

- **Turning around a particular school — but not the school *system* — will not work.** A school exists in a system — that is, a district and a state education bureaucracy. Unless the system is restructured along with the school, there is a great possibility that the bureaucracy will wear down and ultimately defeat innovation at the school level.

- **Tinkering at the margin will not work.** A little change will not solve the problem. Schooling must be changed in fundamental, not superficial, ways. The two battle cries of the status quo are, "We're already doing it" and "It won't work here." The appropriate response to those cries is, "No, you're not" and "It will, too."

- **No *single* change will work.** There is no silver bullet. While school choice, site-based management and alternative forms of teacher certification are interesting and useful concepts, none of them — or any other single approach — will produce the fundamental change that is necessary.

- **More multiple-choice standardized testing will not work.** Standardized testing is beneficial for some purposes and utterly useless for others. Moreover, what you test is what you get. Greatly needed are multiple forms of assessment, including new approaches that match the new kinds of learning that should be expected of students.

- **Efforts involving *only* educators and the education system will not work.** *All* parties holding a stake in education — students, parents, unions, business, social service agencies, the community at large — must be involved and must provide support. Unless the public understands the need and presses for change, meaningful change will not occur.

IN SUMMARY

To help restructure education is to invest in human resources. That makes this effort similar to other corporate investments. The investment needs to be carefully planned, implemented and evaluated. Advantages, disadvantages, costs and benefits need to be calculated. Potential competitors and potential allies must be identified. Realistic timelines must be set. Responsibilities must be assigned and incentives created. Goals must be integrated into overall corporate strategy. And the capacity for persistence and flexibility must be institutionalized.

The major distinction is that the "bottom line" in education restructuring is **children.** The central goal in education is to prepare and empower the future workers, leaders and citizens of our society. The central question is and should remain: "Are all children learning what they need to know?" The question must be asked as clearly, as forcefully, as often and by as many people as necessary to produce the only satisfactory answer — that is, "Yes." Our children and our future are worth the investment.

STATE EXAMPLES

After reading the above challenge, the first response is to raise the following questions. Where has this ambitious agenda been successfully implemented? Who are/were the leaders of the effort? With whom can I talk to get help in translating those successes into an effective plan for my state?

Unfortunately, no business/state leader coalition has solved the problem of transforming the state's education system, though many are actively engaged in the process. At the risk of passing over other promising efforts, two of those examples, South Carolina and the state of Washington, are profiled here. The South Carolina story is the more practical because of the sustained involvement of the state's business community in school reform activity in 1984 and 1989. The story in Washington state is a fine example of a vision of desired student outcomes and the kind of education system that will produce them. Necessary efforts to keep the summaries brief force the elimination of many details of the process in each of the two states.

Business Involvement in State School Reform: The South Carolina Story

South Carolina business leader Montez Martin explained the positive force of business this way:

> "When business leaders, educators and political leaders get behind a good cause and push together, we make an unbeatable team — even when the odds are against us."

Translating good education ideas into action throughout a state is a challenge. It is difficult enough to garner the support to enact major reforms in education; it is more difficult to fund them. These difficulties are vividly reflected by a newspaper headline, "They Said It Couldn't Be Done, But Riley Works a Miracle," after the South Carolina General Assembly passed and funded the Education Improvement Act (EIA) of 1984. Along with the governor's leadership, another ingredient in the "miracle" was business involvement.

In South Carolina, education reform and business-education partnerships are paying dividends in school improvement and gains in student performance. The original intent of reforms in the EIA has been maintained and expanded through continued business involvement in 1989's Target 2000 initiative.

The evolution of the business-education partnership in South Carolina's school reform movement has taken place in four stages. The stages and the activities undertaken by business have been:

- **Developing reforms and ownership**
  - Used polling data to understanding the feelings of the public toward reform.
  - Funded independent studies to sort out key issues.
  - Sought grassroots advice.
  - Focused the attention of state government leaders on education.

- Were prepared to help hammer out the details of reform.

- **Selling and promoting the reforms and funding**

  - Helped design and fund the media campaign to sell the ideas of reform.

  - Participated in speakers bureau activities to promote reform.

  - Funded information packets that give needed detail.

  - Became an active member of the state leaders network.

- **Supporting implementation of the reforms**

  - Assisted schools as they worked to implement the reforms.

  - Monitored reform implementation.

  - Participated in efforts to keep the spotlight on local reform efforts.

- **Maintaining momentum for the reforms**

  - Continued business involvement to fend off attempts to stop reform efforts.

  - Publicized positive outcomes along with new challenges, recognizing that success retains interest.

Adapted from *Sustained Business Involvement in State School Reform: The South Carolina Story*, Occasional Paper #9. Washington, D.C.: The Institute for Education Leadership, Inc., August 1989; Terry Peterson, Executive Director, Joint Business-Education Subcommittee of the South Carolina Education Improvement Act.

Creating Exceptional Public Schools for the Next Century: The Work of the Washington Roundtable

In order to obtain gainful employment, take full advantage of society's opportunities and lead more productive lives in today's environment, men and women must be able to reason, to learn new subjects and to work collaboratively. Individuals must be able to determine what to do when there are no clear standards, work through practical problems when there is no single solution and make effective judgments on the basis of incomplete information. Citizens who succeed in the workplace must also be able to read and comprehend complex material, write and speak well, possess strong analytical skills, understand problems in mathematical and scientific terms, use modern information technology, develop imaginative and creative abilities, work in teams, be self-reliant and able to learn what is needed to know to get the job done. The goal must be that all children acquire these core competencies. Specific skills needed for employment in particular fields should be supplemental.

The Washington Roundtable calls on the educators of Washington to consider these standards carefully. While they are ambitious, they are essential if the education system is to prepare secondary school graduates for rewarding personal lives and successful careers.

The toughest strategic issue requiring attention is that the structure of the education system remains unchanged. Most schools continue to operate in a form and manner designed at the turn of the century. Children enter at age 6 and exit at age 18 (although they also may leave upon passage

through compulsory attendance age — at 16). In between, they are channeled into tracks of different emphasis (academic, vocational or general) and courses of different degrees of difficulty, often at the same grade level. The system has become a production line rather than an educational process. In effect, learning is separated into classrooms and controlled by bells, distributed through types of schools (elementary, middle, junior and high), across tracks (academic, general, technical and vocational) and through time (12 years, nine months a year, five days a week, six to 10 periods a day.) Twelve years of educational participation signifies adequate learning. Competence is established by the acquisition of sufficient credits.

The essential elements of basic knowledge — communications, computation, reasoning, etc. — are treated as discrete components — English, math, history. They are approached separately, with the expectation that students will later re-integrate them.

Too frequently, the results are insulation and isolation. Teachers treat only one piece of a child's education, similar to assembly-line workers who deal with only one small part of the production process. Opportunities for collegiality, interdisciplinary curricular offerings and professional growth and development are far too limited.

Restructuring the education system can and must be based on solid research. The Washington Roundtable recognizes its role as a catalyst in creating change, and it also recognizes the limitations of this role. The Roundtable does not claim to know each detail of a restructured education system. The vision described here, therefore, is presented as a subject for consideration, discussion, refinement and most important, as a stimulant to action.

Restructuring means merging separated curricular elements into a more logical whole and participatory management based on delegation, involvement and the empowerment of teachers. It also requires reconsideration of the age when children enter and leave school and how they should progress through it. It directs attention to mastery rather than courses and tracks. It induces consideration of new approaches in ways teachers are recruited, educated, involved, paid and retained.

Restructuring alters the relationship between the system and the state, as authority is delegated downward to districts and buildings. It forces a change in emphasis from the secondary school to the elementary and middle schools as the places where children acquire basic skills. It requires effective indicators of performance. It raises a question about the age when students should be expected to graduate. It affords parents and students more choice. It involves a fully integrated teaching profession functioning in an articulated system of learning.

An essential aspect of the future restructured system is closer and more persistent linkages between education and business. Business could and should be a valuable participant in defining the knowledge and skills which comprise the core competencies. Moreover, business can be an important contributor and ally in the processes of change at the local school and district level. Neither educators nor businesspeople should be satisfied with feel-good partnerships; both business and education have a vital interest in cooperation on strategic issues.

The Roundtable is enthusiastic about our prospects for moving towards the restructured education system envisioned here.

Adapted from *Creating Exceptional Public Schools For The Next Century: Findings and Recommendations*. Seattle, Wash.: Washington Roundtable, January 1989.

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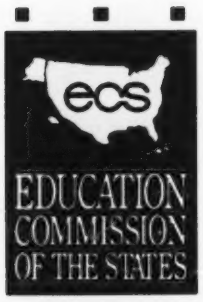

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